



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health
P O BOX 2448
RICHMOND, VA 23218

April 28, 2003

Dear Doctor:

On April 24, 2003, Governor Mark Warner signed an emergency regulation making Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) a reportable condition. As a result, all suspect cases of SARS must be reported to your local health department by the most rapid means available.

SARS is a newly identified syndrome that has caused illness in over 3,500 people outside the United States and has led to 182 deaths. In the U.S., 220 people are suspected to have had SARS, with no deaths reported to date. This viral infection has been transmitted from person to person and has spread quickly to numerous regions of the world.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has been tracking and responding to the reports we have received of potential SARS cases since February 2003. We appreciate your notifying us of these illnesses and the excellent cooperation you have provided in our investigations. We are following the case definition and disease investigation and control procedures defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The case definition and recommendations change regularly as new information becomes available. The best way to keep current is by visiting the CDC web site at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars for the latest information. You can also learn about the number of SARS cases in Virginia by accessing the VDH web site at www.vdh.state.va.us.

When the health department learns of a possible case of SARS, we work with providers to assess the case to determine if the SARS criteria are met, consult with the CDC SARS investigation team, advise regarding the collection and shipment of specimens for laboratory analysis, and ensure proper infection control procedures are put in place by ill persons and those who care for or live with them. We interview the ill individuals about exposure and illness histories and monitor contacts as well.

In preparation for the possibility that the SARS situation may worsen, we are preparing isolation and quarantine orders in the event that such are needed. An isolation order would be needed if ill persons are not hospitalized and not compliant with a stay-at-home recommendation of the health department. Quarantine orders would be indicated if the situation develops such that contacts of ill individuals need to be kept at home in order to prevent the spread of disease. We are attempting to be prepared for any eventuality.

We appreciate your diligence in partnering with the Virginia Department of Health to monitor and control SARS and other emerging diseases of public health importance.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Commissioner



www.vdh.state.va.us